

SCOMM

77:48

RECEIVED

Department of Law

APR 15 1991

10:11:21/2/8/50



U.S. DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

NATIONAL OCEAN SERVICE
OFFICE OF OCEANOGRAPHY AND MARINE ASSESSMENT
OCEAN ASSESSMENTS DIVISION
ROCKVILLE, MARYLAND 20852

8 April 1991

MEMORANDUM FOR: NOAA/GC Thomas A. Campbell
Washington Policy Group
Trustee Council

FROM:

Douglas A. Wolfe
Robert B. Spies
Donald C. Malins

SUBJECT:

RECOMMENDATIONS RELATED TO REVIEW AND
RELEASE OF NRDA DATA AND TO PUBLICATION OF
EXXON VALDEZ ASSESSMENT RESULTS

We want to share with you our collective concerns about recent efforts and activities to place for public access all available, quality-assured NRDA data into the Oil Spill Public Information Center in Anchorage as soon as possible. Our view is that the release of "data" (whether quality-assured or not) without accompanying interpretive reports will raise a series of conflicting interpretations and claims from various interested parties. The controversy ensuing from such claims and counterclaims would be regrettable and could erode public support for the NRDA process. In addition, we believe that the first publicly available interpretations and analyses of the NRDA data should be performed by the NRDA Project Managers, and that the resulting reports and manuscripts should undergo peer review prior to formal publication.

The release of the NRDA planning documents (detailed study plans and interim project reports) should not, in most cases, be a problem as long as they are clearly identified as interim planning documents that: a) are based on incomplete data; b) have not undergone peer review; and c) contain interpretations subject to revision. The raw data that were available to the Project Managers and taken into consideration at the time they drafted those reports could also be appended and made available with the same caveats. Additional data generated more recently, however, should NOT be archived in the repository for public access until such time as the Project Managers have had the opportunity to review, analyze and interpret those data. This concern applies very strongly to the hydrocarbon analytical data collected under project Technical Services No. 2. Large amounts of these data have become available only after the last



interim reports were written, and in many cases, the Project Managers have not yet had an opportunity to review the data, much less develop interpretive reports. In most cases, the Project Managers are still waiting for additional data before they can reasonably undertake their detailed data analyses and interpretations.

We are also concerned that without coordinated direction, the very large base of information (both scientific and economic) developed about the EXXON VALDEZ spill (easily the best-studied spill in human history to date) might be released and published in a haphazard and diffuse manner, resulting in a product not easily accessible either to the scientific community or to the interested public. The current push for release of available data to the Public Information Center could stimulate Project Managers to rush incomplete results towards publication in the most accessible publication outlets. While our principal investigators should definitely be encouraged to publish their results as early as possible in peer-reviewed scientific journals, this process should be driven by the maturation and analysis of logical units of data and the development of significant interpretations and conclusions.

An attractive mechanism for public release of information would be for the Trustees (perhaps in cooperation with Exxon) to sponsor a major symposium for the presentation of EVOS results, and to publish, in one place, a comprehensive collection of scientific papers related to the spill. The sponsors could install an acceptable mechanism for peer review of all papers. The proceedings could be published through an existing scientific journal, or could take the form of a separate, high quality volume (such as that published by the French *Centre National pour l'Exploitation des Oceans* for the *Amoco Cadiz* spill). This approach would motivate the investigators to analyze and publish their results on a rigorous schedule, ensure that a large block of EVOS information (from all possible sources) becomes accessible in one place, and provide a uniform standard for quality control on the publication. A logical and practical time frame for this symposium would be during spring of 1992 (providing ample time for analysis of Oil-Year 3 results). The team of Wolfe, Spies, and Malins possesses considerable experience in the organization and conduct of such symposia and the publication of high quality proceedings. With NOAA's support, we could undertake this activity, working through the existing structure of the Management Team to notify the Project Managers and request their participation. Planning must start very soon, however, if this approach and schedule are to be implemented.

cc: C.N. Ehler